



A SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY OF JUTE LABOUR

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Preface

The survey of economic and social condition of Jute workers in the Industrial Belt round Calcutta in 1945 and 1949 was rendered possible only through the financial help rendered by the Indian Statistical Institute. My thanks are due to them for this facility which enabled the work to be done. On the statistical side, the plan followed earlier by Prof. P. C. Mahalanobis was adhered to with modifications indicated in the Report. Prof. Mahalanobis was kind enough to render technical assistance when needed. My special thanks are due to him. The University of Calcutta made a research grant to enable me to tabulate the data collected in 1949. The Department of Social Work, University of Calcutta has borne the expenses of publication. My thanks are also due to these bodies. Thanks are also due to the surveyors and to Sri H. K. Chaturvedi and Sri Santosh Bhattacharya who helped in supervision of their work.

In the text I have used the terms United Province etc, the old Provincial names for the States now renamed otherwise, as the survey was carried out before such alterations occurred.

I regret that between the proofreaders of the Press and myself, some serious errors have crept into this small publication. The more important of these are shown in the Errata.

9th July, 1952.

K. P. Chattopadhyay.



Errata

Page	Correction
13	For Table 3 read Table 4
16	For Table 4 read Table 5
19	For Table 5 read Table 6
20	For Table 5 read Table 7
21	For Table 6 read Table 8
21	For Table 7 read Table 9
22	For Table 8 read Table 10
23	For Table 9 read Table 11
28	Insert over table Table 12
30	Insert over table Table 13
32	Insert over table Table 14
56 Line 16	For "works" read "words"
56 Line 25	For "hnd" read "had"
64 Line 24	For 4.40 read 4.14



A SOCIO-ECONOMIC SURVEY OF JUTE LABOUR

CHAPTER I

Social Condition.

Introduction :

The condition of industrial labourers in the Calcutta industrial belt was examined by the Royal Commission on Labour in India, in 1929. The evidence tendered before them made it clear that the workers were ill fed and wretchedly housed, and that they enjoyed very few amenities of life. The Commissioners recommended scientific sample surveys. The first scientific study of the condition of the workers in this area was made by P. C. Mahalanobis in 1941 at the request of the Bengal Board of Economic Enquiry. As the major industry round about Calcutta is jute pressing, spinning and weaving the samples selected near Calcutta included large numbers of jute workers. Three samples, one in Jagatdal to the north of Calcutta, one in Budge-Budge to the south of Calcutta and one in Asansol in the mining area were actually selected. Of these, there is only a Draft Report on Jagatdal workers, mainly jute workers, published by the Indian Statistical Institute. (1)

In this survey a complete census was taken of all working class families (actually engaged in factories) in the Jagatdal Police Station, numbering a little over 38

1. Bengal Labour Enquiry—Draft Report Jagatdal—First sample 1941, Statistical Laboratory, Calcutta.



thousand. A two per cent sample was drawn on a random basis. The entire area was divided into five contiguous blocks and surveyors put to work. Each surveyor changed over to the next block after doing a certain proportion of the families and units in his block, this process continuing for all five, so that on an average each surveyor had worked more or less equally in all the blocks. Personal equation was minimised in this way. In 1945 another survey was carried out in this area, under the supervision of K. P. Chattopadhyay at the request of the Chatkal Mozdoor Union (Jute workers' Union). Funds and technical assistance was provided by the Indian Statistical Institute. H. K. Chaturvedi was responsible for supervision in the field. A paper was published by K. P. Chattopadhyay and H. K. Chaturvedi in *Science and Culture*.⁽²⁾ No fresh census was taken at this survey but the plots which fell in the samples selected in 1941-42 were examined. In this way 450 out of about 650 families surveyed earlier were traced and examined again. Another 305 families living on the old plots were included to make up the sample.

In 1948-49 a third survey was undertaken under the supervision of K. P. Chattopadhyay. At his request, the Council of the Indian Statistical Institute sanctioned the necessary funds and arranged for technical assistance. The field workers were trained by him to collect certain social data about the

2. *How Jute Workers Live*, by K. P. Chattopadhyay and H. K. Chaturvedi. (*Science and Culture* February, 1947).



worker families by the genealogical method of anthropological enquiry. This was a special feature of this survey. Another point noted was the use of genealogies to collect accurate data regarding nonresident dependants. The detailed report on economic conditions revealed by this survey will be published by the Indian Statistical Institute. In the present note stress will be laid on the social conditions revealed by this survey and earlier surveys. The design of the survey was similar to that of 1941. A complete census was taken in 1948, during December 1948 and January 1949, and samples drawn following the earlier plots as far as possible. In all 851 units were fully surveyed during February to May 1949. Price samples were also studied during the survey.

Composition of the Labourers :

In the draft report of the 1941 survey, the distribution of workers by province and community (Hindu and Muslim) are carefully noted. It is shown there that the labourers have come mainly from Bihar and the United Provinces. The Bengalees, it is stated, "as a rule shun industrial labour" and their lower percentage found in Jagatdal is quoted in support of this view. It is however noted elsewhere in the report that (Chapter 2) there is a "preponderance of Bengal Labour" in the Batanagar, Budge Budge and Bowali subzones which constituted the zone entitled "Budge Budge". This data has been fabricated very recently and shows that the percentage of Bengalees was 79.5 as against 12.8 Biharis and 2.4 per cent U. P. men.



Historically, up to the beginning of the 19th century, jute weaving was done by Bengal craftsmen like Kapalis who held a monopoly in this manufacture till about 1830. Thereafter Dundee jute mills killed this Indian handloom industry. Dundee in its turn lost the Eastern market and also that of Australia due to the starting of jute mills near Calcutta in the seventies of the last century. The first jute mill was indeed started in 1855 at Rishra but real competition started later as noted. At this period the jute mill labour was entirely local. There was in 1882 only 20 jute mills of which 18 were in Bengal. Of these seventeen were near about Calcutta. It should be remembered that villagers who can earn their livelihood by agriculture or as craftsman will not come to mill areas unless the wages and living conditions are attractive. Factory labour did not have a good time in those days. Hours were very long and there were practically no labour laws for regulating hours of work and terms of engagement. Hence only those who had no land and could not get work regularly as village labourers or craftsmen would come to factories. Higher caste Hindus and those who aped them in those days avoided manual labour. Thus agriculturist castes had sub-sections which considered themselves higher in status because their members did not handle the plough or actually work in the field. Naturally, the needy youth of these communities would not go to factories. They would lose social status won through shunning manual work. In Calcutta, geographical factors and transport also played an important



part in regulating the supply of labour. While this great city was linked to Bombay and North India by railway as early as 1870, communication with many areas of even Khulna and Murshidabad was less direct. The whole of Eastern Bengal and large areas in North Bengal were in point of time further away from Calcutta than Delhi. The towns of Bihar and U. P. were in this respect nearer. When industries developed round Calcutta, the rural proletariat and semi-proletariat from adjoining districts of Bengal at first supplied the need. Up to 1892 when the jute industry in Bengal employed about 66 thousand workmen, the supply was almost entirely local. But the growth of this industry on the narrow belt of country round Calcutta outstripped development of communications within the province. In 1902 i. e. ten years later there were in Bengal 38 Jute mills employing 119 thousand workmen. As a result labour had to be imported from outside. This is the usual rule everywhere, whenever such conditions prevail. Thus, according to the Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India in 1931, (3) the Ahmedabad cotton mills drew at the time 65 per cent of their workmen from Ahmedabad district and adjoining areas. But Bombay had to depend for factory labour mainly on two sources, "by sea from Ratnagiri district to the south, where pressure on the land is very great. and by land from the Deccan districts". The Report adds

3. Report of the Royal Commission on Labour in India, Calcutta 1931 (Whitely Committee)—Report Volume and Volume V Part I.



"The increasing needs of industry and the drying up of other sources owing to the growth of local industries have lately strengthened the flow of labour from much more distant areas particularly the United Provinces"

Regarding Bengal, the Commissioners have made very contradictory statements. They state that "The Bengali have less inclination for factory work than other Indian races; when the industries of the Hooghly (note: the industrial belt near Calcutta on both sides of river Bhagirathi is referred to as Hooghly in the report) were being built up, their economic position was not such as to make the terms offered by the industry attractive". While this last portion of the statement about unattractive conditions in factories is correct, it is wrong to conclude that the surplus labour in Bengal villages deliberately shunned factory work. The Indian Industrial Commission of 1916-18 quotes (4) a Government report on labour in 1906, which shows that "20 years earlier (i. e. in 1886)" all the hands in the jute mills were Bengalees but at the date of the report two thirds of them were immigrants. At present about 90 per cent of the labour is imported. A census was taken in 1902 by the managing agents of four mills in Garulia, Bhadreswar and Titaghur. Another census was taken by the same managing agents in the same areas in 1916, the mills having increased to seven. The result showed 28 per

4. Report of the Indian Industrial Commission 1916-18 (Holland Committee).



cent of Bengali workers in 1902 and 10 per cent only in 1916". Since the poverty of the Bengali agriculturist had not decreased but increased during the period 1886 to 1916 (there were two hundred fifty thousand sales of occupancy rights in land in Bengal in 1913 as against 25 thousand in 1882) and conditions in mills had not worsened, the explanation that Bengalis dislike mill work because they were better off in the villages will not fit in with the actual facts. The explanation is furnished by the system of recruitment followed when the development of industry outstripped the supply of local labour.

The management, almost entirely European, relied "on a class of men known as sardars, usually themselves of similar origin to the labour they supply" (Report of Industrial Commission).

The Royal Commission Report admits that "the immediate employer of a worker is his sirdar. The sirdar gives him his job and it is by his will that he retains it.....They employ and dismiss them and in many cases they house them and can unhouse them. They may own or control the shops which supply the men with food". The Memorandum of the Government of Bengal submitted to the Commissioners state "the direction of emigration for making a living is determined largely by the system of recruitment for the large Bengal industries. Sirdars in jute mills, engineering works and other concerns recruit in their own native villages and surrounding areas, hence there is a tendency for people from the same village or the immediate neighbourhood to



congregate in the same industrial area in Bengal. For example 8240 out of 14092 emigrants from Balia district were found in Howrah but of a total number of 12562 emigrants from the adjoining district of Azamgarh, Howrah had only 2593".

Evidently, when the rapid development of industries took place between 1890 and 1910, labour was brought from outside the province as railway communications were much easier with Bihar, United Provinces and Orissa, especially with districts like Patna, Gaya, Shahabad, Monghyr, Benares, Azamgarh, Balia, Ghazipur, Cuttack and Balasore in these provinces. Recruitment was also heaviest from these areas. Again more than four-fifths of the recruits from Central Provinces come from Bilaspur, Raipur and Nagpur all directly in railway communication with Calcutta. As noted before, East and North Bengal, owing to transport difficulties were further removed in point of travel time, than these areas. While some of the districts of East and North Bengal had probably less numerous needy labourers than Bihar and United Provinces, there were certainly a fair number there. Also the remark about paucity of labourers does not apply to districts like Noakhali or Pabna. The real reason is that once Bihar and United Provinces men were entrenched in the mills, the sirdars steadily recruited their own district folk to preserve their vested interest. Recruitment was not organised in Bengal in the distant districts in the early stages. By the time communications had developed, they had little chance of employment in



the northern and older industrial area. Notwithstanding these handicaps, the industries which developed later south of Calcutta show a preponderance of Bengalee labour disproving the allegations made about their shunning factory work. Noakhali and adjoining areas have for example contributed largely to Batanagar workmen. Even in 1929, the Royal Commission notes that in the Birla jute mills in the southern zone, "69 per cent are local Bengalis". Again at Kushtea in the district of Nadia the management of the textile mill there in their report to the Commission note, that when the mill was started, some trained hands were imported. In 1929 with over 1000 operatives engaged, they state "the whole of the weaving section is run with local labour". The 1941 survey by Mahalanobis in Budge Budge area of which the results have been quoted earlier fully supports the conditions drawn.

Evidence is furnished by certain details in the Memoranda already quoted about non-recruitment in distant areas of Bengal. An examination of the figures for the population of mill towns north of Calcutta reveal how few people from Eastern and Northern Bengal have come there, as compared to persons born outside Bengal. Clearly, the Bengalees

Table 1

Inhabitants of	Born in same District	Born in other parts of Bengal	Born outside the Province
Mill Town	209	96	695
Country Town of Bengal in same area.	814	106	80



from other districts are about the same as in mill and country towns. But they include mostly men from adjoining districts, so that recruitment from distant districts of Bengal may be said to be negligible. As against it there is a huge preponderance of outsiders in Mill towns. They are in fact colonies of immigrants from outside.

The proportion of men from different provinces among Jagatdal mill labourers is shown below.

Table 2

Province	Bihar	U. P.	Bengal	Orissa	C. P.	Madras
Per cent of workers 1941	43.1	36.4	11.6	3.4	3.0	2.5
1949	43.85	35.73	14.32	3.70	0.84	1.56

The tabular statement nicely illustrates the importance of geographic location, (excluding Bengal) once communications had been developed all round.

A more detailed analysis is given below community wise.

Distribution by community :—

Within each province, certain differences are observable in the proportion of labourers, according to religion. Reference has already been made to the social beliefs of Hindus regarding status, which prevents higher castes and their imitators from joining factories. Buchanan has pointed out that in Central Province, Bombay, as well as Madras, "low caste groups



make up a large part of the factory workers" (5). In Bengal weaving and spinning jute, as noted earlier, was done by Kapalis, who are an impure caste i. e. people from whom Bengalee Brahmins, Kayasthas and artisans like the (Bengal) potter, smith, weaver, etc, would not accept water although they were not untouchable. This reduced even more the number of Bengal Hindu castes who might freely send their unemployed youth to jute mills. In Bihar and U. P. on the contrary the ordinary weavers were also impure (but not untouchable) along with smiths, potters and most cowherds, and many cultivators. Hence the joining of jute factories did not create social problems of the type discussed above for larger sections of Hindus in these two provinces. Nevertheless here also, as elsewhere, Hindus suffer from the great disability of social opposition to change of occupation. The great semi-tribal castes or those which have come from similar groups, do not suffer this handicap. The Muslims do not suffer from this restriction except to a very limited extent. Hence they are far more mobile in the matter of change of occupation. One consequence of this has been that Muslim craftsmen can regulate their number according to demand. For Hindu caste-bound craftsmen, this response is in-elastic. If the smith families die out in a Hindu village and there are too many potters to make a living, it is not possible to divert a few young men from potmaking to smith's work. But this is

5. The development of Capitalist Enterprise in India by D. H. Buchanan, N. Y. 1934.



possible for Muslim craftsmen. As a result the number of artisans among Muslims has been higher compared to their population even in predominantly Hindu provinces like Bihar and United Provinces. A similar process is observable for industrial labour. Within the total number from each province, working in the Jagatdal industrial area we find that Muslims form a much larger proportion than Hindus, when compared to their ratio in the home provinces. Thus in Bihar, the relative proportion of the Hindus and Muslims in 1941 was 84·9 and 15·1 respectively considering only these two communities. In Jagatdal the Bihari Hindus were 51·4 per cent and Bihar Muslims 48·6 per cent of the Bihari population in the year.

Table 3
RATIO OF HINDU TO MUSLIM POPULATION

Province	Provincial		Labour area	
	Hindu Per cent	Muslim Per cent	Hindu Per cent	Muslim Per cent
Bihar	1941 Census		Jagatdal figures	
excluding				
Orissa States (6)	84·9	15·1	(1941) 51·4	48·6
			(1949) 53·7	46·3
U. P. (7)	81·4	18·6	(1941) 72·2	27·8
			(1949) 78·6	21·4
Bengal (8)	43·0	57·0	(1941) 69·2	30·8
			(1949) 73·5	26·5
Bengal (Budge Budge figures)		—	(1941) 75·5	24·5

6. Census of India 1941—Bihar.

7. Census of India 1941—United Provinces.

8. Census of India 1941—Bengal.



The apparent discrepancy for Bengal is due to the fact that the Muslim areas of Bengal—Eastern and Northern Bengal had modern communication developed much later than districts adjoining Calcutta which are pre-dominantly Hindu. It is these latter that supplied local labour to jute mills as early as 1870. Even in 1946, prior to Partition, it took longer to reach Mymensingh or Chittagong than Benares, and about twice as long as any big town in Bihar. Also Western and Central Bengal peasantry in general worked on less fertile soil and had to pay much higher rent and cess than East Bengal cultivators, generally four times as much. (9) The agreement in the proportion of Hindu and Muslim labour of Bengalee origin in Jagatdal as well as Budge Budge inspite of their relatively different strength in the total labour population indicates that the source of supply is common.

Although the pressure on population was high in certain areas in East Bengal, communications as noted, prevented recruitment. In the table below the land and population position in 24 Perganas and certain districts of East and North Bengal are noted for comparison.

Table 3*

Districts	24 Pgs.	Pabna	Mymensingh	Tip.	Faridpur	Bkhgj.
Population per square mile 1931	516	795	823	1197	1003	834
Percentage of land available for cultivation	47.4	8	16	7	1	1

9. Man behind the plough by M. Azizul Huq, Calcutta 1939.

*Tip.—Tipperah.

Bkhgj.—Bakharganj.



Clearly the East Bengal districts noted had in 1931 larger surplus labour populations than 24 Perganas, and pressure on land was greater. Also the Census of Bengal for 1921 and 1931 show (10) that cultivators in Bengal decreased by nearly 3 millions from 9 millions in 1921 to 6.2 millions in 1931 whereas agricultural labourers increased by a million in the same period. Hence there was surplus labour available throughout Bengal.

Nevertheless, we find that (a) the entire sample of Bengal Hindu workmen in Jagatdal except for three units i. e. a little over three per cent, come from 24 Perganas and Nadia. One unit is from Birbhum, in West Bengal, with easy railway communication. Only 2 units are from East Bengal. For Bengalee Muslims 20 units are from 24 Perganas and Hughli and 12 units from East Bengal. Since Muslims form a minority in 24 Perganas and Hughli and a big majority in East Bengal, the failure of Muslims of East and North Bengal to secure jobs in larger numbers in the mills in Jagatdal must be ascribed to reasons given earlier.

The all round drop in Muslim percentage of mill workers in 1948-49 is to be explained by the shift of Muslim population which took place due to Partition of India following widespread communal riots, and the setting up of a Muslim State in East Bengal.

Type of Units :

The workers live in two main types of units.

10. Census of India 1931.



Some of them have wife and children or parts of their family with them and have been described in the earlier survey reports as living with their "family". Others live by themselves, either each man cooking his own meal or several messing together and some times engaging a cook. Some individuals take meals in some restaurant regularly. Such units have been described in the earlier surveys as "individuals". Both the terms are slightly misleading. The term "family" here does not refer to the complete biological or simple family consisting of a man, his wife and all unmarried children. The normal family, in India, often includes a widowed mother, a widowed sister, an orphan nephew perhaps, or a widowed aunt and or her child. Less common nowadays is the joint family where a man, his married sons, their wives and children live together. This is the patrilineal extended (= joint) family, which was the dominant pattern in the villages in this area several generations ago. The simple family with one or two other dependants as noted above may be referred to as the Intermediate (briefly Int) type. A broken up simple family, where a man and a child or a man and wife but no children, stay in the town and the others in the village may be referred to as broken (Brk) type. In the surveys of 1941-42 and 1945 no attention was paid to this aspect of the units. As the genealogical method was not employed (Chattopadhyay* was not able to carry his views on this point in 1945), it was not possible to collect exact data about the complete household



including nonresident dependants. This defect has been rectified in the 1948-49 survey. The extent of error introduced and certain repercussions in the application of the data published will be realised from the following paragraph.

In 1941 the "family" in Jagatdal consisted of 4.33 individuals on an average. In 1945 it was 4.42 in the same area. But the average size of the simple family in the scientific sense varies between 5 and 6 in Bengal, Bihar and the United Provinces. Obviously the so-called "family" unit in Jagatdal was in many instances a broken family. There was on an average in every case, a non-resident dependant. Calculation of minimum living wages on the basis of a "family" (Brk) of size 4.3 or 4.4 will lead to different results from those based on a family of size 5.4 as given by the Census of India for 1941 - since the partial upkeep of one non-resident dependant has to be taken into account. The failure to record the complete genealogy will also give a wrong impression about the number of children of working class parents, and about their fertility rate.

We may now discuss the data collected about the type of units in the different surveys.

Table 4

Year	Family		Individual		Remark
	No.	per cent	No.	per cent	
1941	377	56	295	44	Figures of Draft Report, 1941
1941	379	57.7	278	42.3	Figures of Sankhya, Vol. 8.
1945	455	60.3	300	39.7	Figures of Science and Culture, 1947



It is clear that the composition of the population in the matter of "Family" and "Individual" groups had not changed appreciably in the interval.

A detailed examination of Family and Individual groups for 1949 has been rendered possible by the careful tabulation of genealogies in the 1948-49 survey. Scrutinising only the complete cards, giving necessary details about family, it is found that there are the following types of Individual as well as Family Units :-

- | | | |
|--|--------|-----------|
| 1. Persons without family here or at home and living alone | ... | 46 units |
| 2. Persons with families at home but living here alone, either cooking for self or messing with one or more unrelated persons or eating in a restaurant. | ... | 209 units |
| 3. Living with wife here but children left at home | ... | 6 units |
| 4. Living with wife : No issue | .. | 60 units |
| 5. Living with wife and one or more children | | 220 units |

Only one such family has left two children at home. The others have all their children with them.

- | | | |
|---|-----------|----------|
| 6. Living with wife and children and one or more other dependants | ... * ... | 93 units |
| 7. Wife left at home : Some children with the husband here | ... | 17 units |



8. Several related earners, some- times with wives and or children staying together and eating in the same kitchen	189 units
	Total	...	840 units

Clearly 255 units of category 1 and 2 are genuinely individuals. Where a father and adolescent son or brother or similar relative who normally forms part of a simple or joint family, eat together at home at a common kitchen, socially the unit should be considered a broken family. Where however two adults just mess together for convenience even if related, it would be better to treat these as individuals. Categories 4 and 5 totalling 280 give the number of complete simple families, excluding married daughters who stay elsewhere. Only one of these units deviates slightly from the full family. Categories 3 and 7 totalling 23 units are frankly broken families. Category 6 on the other hand numbering 93 units is an Intermediate type of family, larger than the simple family. Category 8 ranges from units like two brothers or a father and son staying together, to a nearly, complete joint family.

If we transfer those cases of category 8 where only adult men of the family stay together and eat in a common kitchen, to the "Individuals" we get an increase of these units to 265. The percentage of "Individuals" units rises in that case to 31.6 which is close to that for 1945.

We have therefore 373 complete family units, some with additional members, and 265 individual units.



while there are another 202 units of various broken types of simple and joint family. It is therefore not correct to assume from the lumped total of "Family" units that three fifths of the workers live normal family lives. In a good proportion of cases, it is an incomplete kind of family life. The condition of common residence and common kitchen of all the members of the full family and regulation of sex life of husband and wife, as well as bringing up of children are not fulfilled in a fair number of broken families. Only 44·4 per cent of the units constitute complete families.

Table 4

Type	Individual	Complete Family	Broken Family
Per cent	31·6	44·4	24·0

A detailed analysis on community and provincial basis of family types may now be made.

In 1941 for all provinces taken together, Muslims showed a percentage of 46·8 family units of all types, and 53·2 for individuals. The Hindus on the contrary showed more family units, having 61 percent of them and only 39 percent individuals. The ratio of family types to individuals for different provinces given in the tables in the Draft Report is inadequate as Hindus and Muslims are lumped together, and we are left to guess whether the high frequency of individuals or the family in particular provinces is due to communal preponderance.



Table 5

**FAMILY PERCENTAGES AMONG LABOURERS FOR EACH AREA
1941.**

Province	Total Number of Units	Hindu	Muslim	Percentages	
				Family all types	Individual
Bihar	290	51.4	48.6	43.1	56.9
U. P.	245	72.2	27.8	64.9	35.1
Bengal	78	69.2	30.8	74.3	25.7
Madras	18	100.0	—	88.9	11.1

It is clear that those provinces which have contributed a predominantly high proportion of Hindu workmen, show a larger proportion of family units in 1941.

However the factors which decide whether the family shall be brought to the industrial area or not are of different kinds. First of all, purdah of Muslims and the privacy needed by Hindus may operate against women being brought in. It will of course be possible for better paid workmen to bring in their wives, as they will earn more and therefore be able to rent better housing accommodation. Again, those workers who have been completely proletarianised, and have been working for more than one generation as industrial workers, are likely to have their families in the factory area which is now becoming their home.

BCU 287



Table 6
FAMILY TYPES IN 1949

Number of Units	*Bengal Family	Ind.	Bihar Family	Ind.	United Province Family	Ind.	Madras Family	Ind.
Hindu	79	8	136	59	147	82	14	1
Muslim	21	11	103	64	50	10	Nil	Nil
Percent Hindu	90.8	9.2	69.6	30.4	64.2	35.8	93.0	7.0
Percent Muslim	65.6	34.4	61.7	38.3	82.5	17.5	—	—

* A few units are Biharis settled in 24 Parganas. They earn less but follow the family pattern of Bengali Hindus. The first figure is for family, and the second for individual.

The average incomes of the units per month are shown in the following table, in rupees (nearest integer).

Table 7

Province	Bengal	Bihar	United Provinces	Madras
Hindu	141	107	95	128
Muslim	94	93	101	—

If the presence of women of the household had depended only on the income, we should have Bengal Hindus leading, followed by Madras and then Bihar Hindus, with United Provinces Muslims* fourth, the three others occupying the next position together, for

168/89



family percentage. Actually, the Madras Hindus and United Provinces Muslims deviate from this order.

Part of the explanation is to be found in the composition of the earners. Among Bengal Hindu workmen, not one woman from the family groups works in factories. The few women who work are unattached widows. On the other hand there are 15 women earners for 15 units from Madras. Every one is a member of a family unit. If we subtract the earnings of women, the average per Madras Hindu unit drops to Rs. 79/- only. On the other hand if we exclude the few women individual earners from the Bengal units and average the income of true Bengalis only the average income rises to Rs. 149/- per unit. Similarly if we exclude the income of women for the other communities we get :—

Table 8
INCOME TABLE FOR MEN

Province	Bengal	Bihar	United Provinces	Madras
Hindu	Rs. 149	Rs. 94	Rs. 78	Rs. 79
Muslim	Rs. 91	Rs. 90	Rs. 100	—

The proportion of women earners in individual as well as family units is given in the next table, per 100 units of their own community and Province.



Table 9

Province	Bengal	Bihar	United Provinces	Madras
Hindu	2.5	25.9	37.1	100
Muslim	6.2	9.0	8.3	Nil

As noted before no Bengal Hindu woman of a family unit works in factories while on an average every family unit from Madras sends a woman to the factory. Among U. P. Muslims 3 out of 5 women workers found come from family units; among Bihar Muslims 12 out of 15 are family women, while both the women so working among Bengal Muslims are of family units. On the whole however Muslims are chary of sending their women to work in factories. This is the result of their social rule of purdah. Among Bihar Hindus all the 50 women workers are of family units; for U. P. Hindus 82 out of 85 such earners are family women. On the whole 575 families of all communities sent 179 women workers in 1949 i. e. 31 per 100 families as against 35 and 43 in 1941 and 1945 respectively. It is clear that the U. P. Muslim men earn more than Bihar Hindu men. Hence they bring in families to a greater extent than Bihar or U. P. Hindus. The latter would not have been able to bring that proportion of family women to the industrial area which we find but for the fact that such large numbers of women, almost all family members, also



work in factories and thus make family life together possible. The presence of the woman in fact is the main factor that helps it as she is not here a dependant to a large extent. The difference in wages between U. P. Muslims and Bihar Hindus does not however account for the large difference in family percentage. The other important factor to which we have referred, the extent to which the link with the village has been broken may now be considered. Among Bihar Hindus the workers have come from agricultural and farm worker fathers to the extent of 62 per cent. Only 19 percent had an industrial worker as father. On the other hand the U. P. Muslim industrial worker is derived to the extent of 33 per cent from fathers who were also in the same occupation. Other craftsmen have sent their children to the extent of 16 per cent. Only 40 percent are of agricultural stock.

A more detailed analysis of U. P. Muslims shows that, of workers of agricultural stock 75 per cent are in family units and 25 per cent are individuals, whereas among children of industrial workers who are now earners, 95 per cent live in family units. It is therefore clear that workers of industrial stock among U. P. Muslims have made the industrial area their home (associated with family life) to a far greater extent, almost universally—than those of agricultural stock. The higher proportion of family units among U. P. Muslims is therefore to be ascribed largely to this cause. The general tendency of all factory labour derived



from industrial working class stock to live with the family in the industrial area is discussed later.

Size of the family :

Complete figures with details of adults and adolescents are available in all the cards excepting a few, where genealogical details were not furnished by the informant. Excluding these cards we find that 265 "individual" units have 294 adults, while 572 families consist of 2483 members. The average number per resident family unit is therefore 4.34. The number of non-resident dependants for the entire 837 units is given as 2514 bringing the total to 5291. This gives the size of the complete family for these workers as consisting of 6.32 individuals. As the Census of India and other surveys give a figure a little over 5 for commensal families there would appear to be a discrepancy. This is not however the case. A number of units are joint or related families with several earners. The proportion of such families is 85 out of 837 i. e. a little over 10 per cent. If we add a minimum of 85 more units to the total of 837 to get an estimate of the size of commensal families of these people, we find that it works out as 5.74. We may therefore say that the size of a resident commensal family in Jagatdal is 4.34 and each such family, generally has 1.4 non resident dependants. The Census Report for Bengal 1921 shows that on an average, a married couple who survived the entire reproductive period of life of the wife, of about 32 years, had six children, the rate of birth being much



less during the last half of the period. On an average, a simple family would therefore consist of the parents and a little over three children, (if we assume even distribution of survival from the time of marriage till the end of the reproductive period). The size of the family will therefore be a little over 5 in number. Since a widowed mother or sister or some such relative often stays in such a group the average size will be between 5 and 6. The size of families in residence and the corrected size of the complete commensal family, and number of non-resident dependants agrees excellently with the findings of Prof. Radhakamal Mukherji for Bengal and Bihar railway workers. (11)

Earners :

The total number of wholetime and part-time Earners in 837 units which furnish full details in these respects, is 1090 men and 200 women. Only 24 of these are boys and 1 girl, below 16 years of age. The dependants in residence in Jagatdal, for these family units number 144 male children, 169 female children, defining these as below 6 years of age. Also 294 are boys and 312 are girls below 16 years, and 122 adult men and 446 adult women. The total comes to 1487. In these 572 units there are 996 earners. The average of resident dependants per earner in 1948-49 was 1.5 only. In 1941 the number of resident dependants per earner was 1.67.

11. The Indian working class by Prof. Radhakamal Mukherjee (Bombay, 1945).



It fell in 1945 to 1'43. As Bhattacharya and Charurvedi have pointed out in their paper on Jagatdal jute workers, this indicated greater employment of family members. They have ascribed this to soaring prices necessitating more income. To this should be added the important fact that the necessity for higher income could be met in this way because during the war there was an increased demand for labourers. Omission to state this explicitly may leave a wrong impression that only higher prices forced the men and women of the family to come forward to take employment, and that but for higher prices jobs would have gone abegging. The drop in earners compared to dependants in 1948-49 is not due to falling prices, but to a fall in demand for labour, with large scale retrenchment.

Women earners constituted in 1948-49 only 15'5 percent of the total earners. Among them 41 i. e. 20'5 per cent are individual earners or heads of families. The rest are women living in families, where there are male earners. We find that 26'3 per cent of adult women of family units were so employed. The figures for 1941 and 1945 are 29'2 and 37'1 for adult women earners who are members of family groups and are not heads of such families. Here again, the rise in employment of women workers in 1945 was jointly due to the drop in real wages and rise in demand for labour. The fall in proportion of women earners in 1948-49 is due mainly to retrenchment.



Period of Employment, and absence during 12 months.

It has been noted, that there were 1290 earners in the units studied. Some of them are not however jute workers. Excluding these working dependants and a small number of cards where details of absence etc are not stated we find the following details for jute workers.

	Number of Earner,	Total Months
Period of Employment		
including absence	1239	14050
Absence for sickness	335	270
Absence for visit	381	717
Absence for other causes	55	59

A small proportion of the earners were more or less casually employed. This has reduced the average period of employment to 11.3 out of 12 months. The number of effective earners is therefore less to this extent i. e. by 6 per cent. It is 1167. The average period of absence owing to sickness was a little over 24 days per individual per annum for 27 per cent of workers. The long period of average absence indicates the occurrence of serious illness among this proportion of workmen in a year. For all effective earners the average comes to one week's absence owing to sickness per annum. We find also that during 1948 as many as 381 out of 1239 earners went away for a total period of 717 months. The average length of Home visit therefore works out as 1 month 26 days. About 31 per



cent of workmen went home for this period. On an average we may say that a worker goes home once in three years for eight weeks. As regards absence for all reasons together the average on the basis of effective earners works out at 27 days per annum.

Class affiliation of the workers :

Since India is even now mainly an agricultural country, and modern industrial development started barely a century ago, the working class is naturally connected largely with the village community. In the beginning, of course, the entire factory labour was drawn from agriculture and other village occupations. Since the condition of agriculturists during the past fifteen years and also earlier has been unsatisfactory, in Bengal, Bihar as well as the United Provinces, industrial labour has received large contingents of surplus able bodied men from this strata of society. The proportion of cultivators with a holding below 3 acres needed for subsistence, not comfortable living of a family, was over thirty three in the United Provinces and over fifty in Bengal in 1936 when the Land Revenue Commission toured these areas. (12) As however large numbers of industrial workmen have been engaged in factories for at least half a century, we expect that a certain proportion of them will have stuck to the occupation of their father as factory workers. We

12. Report of the Land Revenue Commission. (Bengal Govt. Press 1940).





have already noted some details in the earlier section about this stock.

An enquiry was made of the occupation of the father in each case studied. In 49 per cent of cases, they had been engaged in agricultural occupations, and one per cent in village craft. We may therefore say that half the workmen were children of farmers and agricultural labourers. Exactly 25 per cent had fathers who been industrial workers. Service accounted for a small per cent and 1 per cent could not give definite information and 1 per cent were sweepers. The remainder came from other miscellaneous occupations. An examination was also made of the nature of the economic link with the village. Fully 58·7 per cent are landless, not owning even one hundredth part of an acre of land. Another 20·7 per cent owned less than 2 bighas i. e., two thirds of an acre of land. Clearly the bulk of the labourers had come from the landless agriculturist and poor sharecropper class.

Table

Land Owned in Bigha	Nil	0·01-2	2·01-5	5·01-10	10·01-15
Per cent of Cards	58·7	20·7	10·3	5·1	5·2

Bigha= $\frac{1}{4}$ acre

Interesting light is thrown on the growth of true industrial proletariat by the analysis of figures for family types by occupation of the father. Among workers with agriculturist, and farmer fathers, as many as 38·4 per cent of workers live in Individual units and nearly the same percentage -38·0 in Intact



families with or without any additional dependant. The rest are broken families, disrupted to different degrees. Among workers whose fathers were Industrial Labourers, "Individuals" are 21'3 per cent, while Intact families of both types together make up 54'4 per cent of the total. Also among Broken families, a type which is infrequent but present to the extent of about 2'4 per cent, among workers of agricultural stock - the variety where the wife remains at home in the village, while the father has some children with him, is unknown among the industrial proletariat of industrial labour stock. Again, in the matter of Intact families, the labourers of industrial stock show a frequency of 36'4 per cent of simple families and 18 per cent of families with one or more extra members besides parents and children. On an average such families have 1'6 extra members per unit. Among workers derived from agricultural stock, the percentage of simple families staying in the industrial area is much higher compared to the Intermediate type. The percentages are 32'0 and 6'0 respectively. This is to be expected as the extra appendages are more likely to be left at home in the village for the worker of agricultural stock whose roots are still there. For the industrial proletariat of working class origin, the home is practically in the factory area. Hence his family of both types are to be found there in a more balanced proportion. The agricultural stock shows its greater affiliation to the older pattern of joint families by the larger number of additional members in the Intermediate type. It is two per family for them.

**Table**

Father's Occupation	Industrial Labour	Farming
Per cent Individual	21.3	38.4
Per cent Simple family Intact	36.4	32.0
Per cent Intact family with extra member.	18.0	6.0
Number of extra member per family.	1.6	2.0

Change in marriage customs :

It is evident that economic distress which impels a youngman of cultivator and artisan parents to migrate to cities, will affect marriage customs. We have seen how it changes the type of the family unit. In a later chapter the actual shortage observed in 1945 and 1941 in the matter of food, clothing, and houseroom, which they have to suffer, is described in terms of data collected. Here we shall discuss how this shortage of means affects the necessary social rites that normally accompany marriage.

The usual custom among Hindus as well as Muslims is to have marriages arranged by parents and elders of the family. Among the higher castes and those who imitate their manners, the bridegroom expects, a gift at marriage from the bride's father. But agricultural castes and artisans among Hindus, as also many Muslims charge the bridegroom's family a payment in cash for giving the girl in marriage. Among Muhammadans this usually



takes the shape of a settlement on the wife incorporated in the deed drawn up at the wedding.

It has been observed among Hindu castes, Muslims and Tribal folk elsewhere that economic distress, which worsens the condition of one generation over that of the preceding, leads to greater frequency of less expensive forms of marriage (13). Also where payment is made to the bride or her family—the custom being somewhat wrongly termed that of “bride price”—such payment may be spread over a number of years or deferred. In the following table the number and frequency of different types

Table 15

Age of Woman now		“Bride Price” paid as usual	“Bride Price” deferred payment	Payment to Bride groom	Widow marriage	Total
25 or less	No.	162	259	595	23	1039
	Per cent	15.6	24.9	57.3	2.2	100
25 + but below 40	No.	117	129	358	35	639
	Per cent	18.3	20.2	56.0	5.5	100
Above 40 and up to 70	No.	96	147	215	22	480
	Per cent	20.0	30.6	44.8	4.6	100
Total No.		375	535	1168	80	2158

of marriage among three categories of women, now below 25 years, between 25 and 40 years, and above

13. (a) Korku marriage customs and some changes by K. P. Chattopadhyay (*Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1946).

(b) The Economic structure and social life in six Bengal villages by Ram Krishna Mukherji (*American Sociological Review* June 1949)



40 years of age, are noted. A somewhat larger number of marriages including these, but also several hundred instances where the type was not noted or remembered, were tabulated to obtain the average age of marriage in the genealogical family groups of the workmen surveyed. In all a total of 2542 marriages gave an average age of 11.2 of the women at marriage.

The data shows that over half the marriages were based on payment to the bride or her folk, in the case of those married on an average 29 years ago or earlier. Most of these marriages took place in the first twenty years of this century—prior to the first World War and during it. The second group of marriages took place on an average between 1922 and 1936, or roughly between World War I and World War II. The third group of marriages took place just before the last war, during it and after it.

It has already been noted that the higher castes and those who imitate them do not pay "bride price". Hindu peasants who normally charge or pay bride price, do not do so for a boy who has secured a steady job and works in Calcutta. The boy has gained prestige and increased social status thereby—provided the occupation followed is not considered inferior to that prescribed for the caste. Thus a Kaibartta fisherman or Bagdi field labourer would consider regular employment in a factory as raising his status. The increase in the proportion of marriages where a gift has to be made to the bridegroom in the second period, after World War I



shows a trend towards adoption of this attitude in marriage to a greater extent in regard to industrial labourers. The fall in real wages in the next period seems to have acted as a check on this trend.

As we have inadequate data regarding the percentage of the different castes among industrial workers (and the samples, where these have been noted on our cards are too small for generalisation) a more detailed analysis of the frequency of this custom is not possible.

A much more promising and interesting line of investigation is furnished by the data regarding workers who paid bride price. These marriages have been tabulated under two heads—those who paid it as usual at marriage and those who deferred payment.

Table 16

Period of occurrence	Bride Price paid as usual	Payment deferred
I i. e. 1895-1920	39.5	60.5
II i. e. 1921-36	47.6	52.4
III i. e. 1937-49	38.5	61.5

From a survey of prices and wages D. H. Buchanan has shown that in India between 1890 and 1914 "prices rose markedly and wages followed though with a lag...with the war time boom wages lagged for several years then advanced sharply but unevenly. About jute labour he points out (ibid) that "for several years their real wages was reduced by one third" As a Government Committee to enquire into strikes



in 1921 (14) admitted—"The increase in the cost of food stuffs, cloth and other necessities has been followed by a rise in the wages but the rise in wages has not at all timeskept pace with the increase in prices." This means that real wages had fallen on an average and there had been deterioration in economic condition. After this period however labour became more organised, there was greater consciousness of rights, and organised struggles for bettering condition of labour. The wages rose compared to prices. Real wages therefore increased, and in some industries, to a marked degree, over that of the preceding period. Hence compared to period I, the succeeding period II was one of improvement of economic condition. The Report of the Royal Commission of 1929-31 notes "a sharp rise in prices took place towards and after the end of the war. Increase in wages were granted but these did not as a rule meet the rise in prices." "Prices reached their highest point in the autumn of 1920 and the general tendency thereafter was downwards so that by 1923 the workers were generally better off than before the war. Since then prices have fallen.....but there has been no general fall in wages commensurate with that of prices and the general level of real wages for industrial workers is probably higher at the moment than at any previous period." Buchanan has shown that the prewar level was actually passed in 1926 and the improvement maintained up to 1932 when his

14. Report of the Committee on Industrial Unrest in Bengal (Bengal Secretariat Press 1921)



book was written. In Period III again, real wages fell and the industrial workers had to cut down expenses on food below the minimum level, as also on clothing and other necessities. This is made quite clear in the figures noted in the paper on jute workers by Chattopadhyay and Chaturvedi. We find that both in period I as well as in period III there is deferment of payment of bride price in a very large proportion of cases. It is much less in period II. The picture of the effect of the somewhat better condition in the middle period and worse position before and after can be made more clear if we restrict our analysis to the data for workmen whose fathers were also Industrial Labourers. For them the bulk of marriages are of actual workmen whereas in the other cases many marriages are of village folk who follow farming.

TABLE OF PAYMENT OF BRIDE PRICE

Table 17

Period		Usual	Deferred
Period I	—	34.1	75.9
Period II	—	42.5	57.5
Period III	—	27.0	73.0

The sensitive response to deteriorated economic condition is very clearly brought out by the figures in table 17.

The size of the samples in a distribution of the total marriages recorded with complete details of type and age, is too small in some cases when shown province by province and community for comparison



with accuracy. Also in the case of certain types of marriage the age of the woman concerned is not available in different communities in some of the provincial groups. While errors in estimation for the entire labour population is minimised due to combination of all such groups, comparisons of figures of different provinces and within it of different communities is not permissible. Some general trends are however clearly visible, not affected by this factor.

The following table gives the frequency of different types of marriages among Hindu and Muslim jute workers in Jagatdal, hailing from Bengal, Bihar and United Provinces, taken together.

TABLE 18

	Age group of woman	Payment to Bride		Payment to groom	Widow marriage	No payment to either side	Total
		Immediate	deferred				
Hindu	Less than 25	No. 99	6	545	14	79	743
		13.3%	0.8	73.4	1.9	10.6	
	25+ to 40	No. 81	3	386	24	47	541
		15.0%	0.6	71.3	4.4	8.7	
	40+	No. 26	3	144	12	22	207
		12.6%	1.5	69.6	5.7	10.6	
Muslim	Less than 25	No. 48	253	32	10	5	348
		13.8%	72.7	9.2	2.9	1.4	
	25+ to 40	No. 43	155	13	18	8	237
		18.1%	65.4	5.5	7.6	3.4	
	40+	No. 23	113	12	6	nil	154
		14.9%	73.4	7.8	3.9	—	

It has been pointed out before that payments to the bride's folk have been deferred in a certain proportion of cases in each period and that this figure fell in period II when the economic condition of mill hands improved to some extent. It now appears that for Hindus there are very few cases of deferred payment while this is common (postponed payment) in the case of Muslims. The difference is based on



the Hindu practice of not allowing postponement of payment in almost all cases. Whatever was the rule in the Smriti period two thousand years ago, the Hindu castes which take payment for a girl at marriage, consider it as a kind of right of the father, brother or other lawful and natural guardian of the girl. The money does not form the property of the girl but goes to her folk. Among Muslims, however, the payment is often in the nature of a settlement on the wife and becomes her property. Since she will live with her husband, postponement of payment is usually allowed. No distinction has been made by the surveyors in collecting figures for payment to the bride's father and settlement on the wife. Hence among Muslims, as noted in the tables we find a high proportion of deferred payment. Both groups however show the effect of the change in economic condition in the three periods. Among Hindus there is a perceptible rise in the proportion of immediate payments and a slight drop in deferments in the second period. Among Muslims both changes are larger in this period.

Certain other social tendencies are also clearly indicated by the figures. Thus both among Hindus and among Muslims, there is a decrease of widow marriage. Among Hindus the high castes in orthodox society decry the custom. Vidyasagar's permissive legislation has affected only the educated and less orthodox section of Hindu society. A detailed examination of the figures for Hindus for each province shows that in Bihar there was a rise in widow



marriage to 6.4 percent in period II from 4.8 percent in period I, with a drop in period III to 2.7 percent. The influenza epidemic of 1919 had killed millions of people in Northern India (including Eastern and Western India) and left an abnormally high proportion of widows and widowers. In Bengal widow marriage among peasants, craftsmen and labourers has been practically extinct for more than three generations at least. No adjustment in the abnormal situation took place there. People who had to pay "bride price" did not marry widows to save expense (non-payment of price). In U. P. which is the ancient land of Hindu orthodoxy also there was no rise in widow marriage in period II. In Bihar however, a province with a far more numerous semitribal Hindu population with widow marriage widely prevalent, there was an appreciable rise, showing that this adjustment had taken place. Social adjustment to economic changes occurs quickly in simpler cultures. The normal drop in widow marriage due to the social hankering after position in the caste scale has among Bihar labourers been compensated and exceeded by the economic force which led the poorer elements unable to pay "bride price" to take a widow as wife.

Another trend which is clearly perceptible among Hindus, is the imitation of high castes in the matter of payment to the bridegroom. Among Bihar and U. P. Hindu mill hands, the wives work in the factories. Hence the women are valuable as wage earners. The men cannot claim non-payment of "bride price"



on the ground that the wives are not so useful in town as in the agricultural village life. This has served as a check to the social trend to pay money to the groom, which would have increased the proportion of this type of marriage in period II. Also the drop in real wages in period III has lowered the economic position of the men working in factories. The opposing forces have to some extent counteracted each other. In Bengal, on the other hand, no Hindu family woman works in a mill. Hence the effect of the change in real wages on frequency of marriage type where money is paid to the bride groom, ought to be larger. To follow the extent of the changes in each province, it is however necessary to take note of a third type of marriage, where no payment is made on either side. Among Hindus who have a dominant "tilak" type i.e. bride groom payment type of marriage this is evidently the result of those who are not willing to pay "bride price" in the caste sections which have to pay it, not succeeding in securing their recognition of superior status and thereby of payment to the man. In Bengal the movement towards upper caste types is indicated by the following table of percentages.

TABLE 19

Period	Payment to bride's folk	Payments to groom	No Payment	Widow marriage
I	28.1	56.2	12.5	3.2
II	15.3	65.9	17.6	1.2
III	11.4	74.6	14.0	Nil



The social trend revealed in the figures for payment to the groom should have been higher in period II than in period III, if the economic factor had been the mainforce. The table shows how "bride price" marriage and widow marriage frequencies have been steadily falling. Since it is by losses from these groups that the "No Payment" and "Groom payment" have increased, we may add these two last figures to assess the true change. The totals of these two frequencies and the totals for "Bride" price and widow remarrige are noted below.

TABLE 20

Peroid	Total Groom and no payment	Bride Price and Widow Marriage
1	68. 7	31. 3
11	83. 5	16. 5
111	88. 6	11. 4

It is clear that the increase in groom payment and no payment together is nearly three times in period II over its earlier epoch than that in period III. The difference in rate of change is to be ascribed mainly to the favourable economic condition of the workmen in period II. The mechanism of change seems to have been as follows: In period II, some of the "No Payment" folk apparently succeeded in getting "Groom Payment", moving from the semi-orthodox to the orthodox upper caste type. But a much larger proportion of people in the "Bride price" group were getting good wages in period II. A large portion of them moved towards the groom payment type. Some went directly to that group but the larger number must



have stopped in the midway position of "No payment" thereby raising its frequency. When real wages fell, the families and groups already entrenched in semi-orthodox or orthodox upper caste types are not likely to change back to "lower caste" types of marriage according to the well-known, tendency among Hindu castes. But it is not likely that an appreciable number of "Bride price" folk would be able to change over to socially higher types of marriage in this period on economic grounds. The much smaller change in the bride price group in period III as well as in the "No Payment" group reveals the steady social trend towards imitation of higher castes even in the face of adverse conditions. It should however be remembered that the Bengal Hindu jute workers even in period III were getting living wages. This point is worked out in the second part of this report. The Bihar and U. P. men were below this level to a considerable extent in period III.

We may now study the figures for U. P of Hindu workmen.

TABLE 21
U. P. figures in percentages.

Period	Payment Bride	Payment Groom	No-Payment	Widow marriage
I	10.9	70.7	10.8	7.6
II	15.8	73.9	6.3	4.0
III	14.5	76.6	7.1	1.8

The figures for this province show a remarkably sharp decline in the frequency of widow marriage.



While a small part of it may be due to higher castes not practising widow remarriage coming to Jute mills, the sharp decline is an indication of the strength of the social movement towards upper caste customs among the labourers. Corresponding to this change we should have a sharp rise in the frequency of marriages with payment to the groom. But this social trend met with powerful opposition from the vested rights which claimed "bride price" at marriage. The large scale employment of family women in jute mills made family life possible. The women taken in marriage are therefore valuable from the economic standpoint. Hence this has enabled the "Bride price" group to strengthen its position. As in Bengal the shift has not taken place in one step generally. The pull towards upper caste customs led to the decrease of widow marriage in periods II as well as III. Naturally, the people who are of sections that used to marry widows and of lower rank socially, cannot move straight away to the group of superior status claiming "Groom payment". They will have moved to the "No Payment" group. This last group, recruited from "Bride Price" folk trying to move up, will lose a portion of its members, as the stronger position of the Bride's people will compel payment at marriage to the latter. On the other hand a small better paid section, with the higher wages in Period II will move from the "No Payment" group to the "Groom Payment" group. As a result of the operation of these three set of forces, we find that "Bride Price" marriages have recorded a sharp increase in



frequency, "No Payment" marriages have dropped a good deal, while there is in "Groom Payment" marriage a slight increase in frequency in period II.

The social forces in Bihar are somewhat more complex. In that province, there is a much larger semitribal Hindu population among whom widow marriage has maintained its prevalence. The table below gives the details of marriage types for Bihar Hindus,

TABLE 22
BIHAR FIGURE IN PERCENTAGES.

Period	Payment Bride	Payment Groom	No Payment	Widow Marriage
I	12.1	73.5	9.6	4.8
II	15.3	70.4	7.9	6.4
III	14.8	69.1	13.4	2.7

The big jump in widow marriage in period II in Bihar has been referred to earlier and its explanation noted, as due to the abnormally large number of widows left behind by the influenza epidemic of 1919. Apart from this sharp rise, it is clear that there is a distinct trend towards reduction of widow marriage. The rate of decline is however much less than what has been observed in U. P. or Bengal. In other words, the forces moving these social groups towards high caste customs and higher caste status in this respect are in Bihar much less in strength. If such forces are weak in other fields too the upward trend in "Groom Payment" marriage frequency



will also be weak. But here also, this trend has to contend with the powerful opposing force working in the direction of increasing "Bride Price" marriage frequencies. The employment in factories of a large number of family women among Bihar Hindu mill workers, has strengthened their position and hence the demand for payment to the bride's family at marriage. Among Bihar Hindu workers, it appears that the pull of this force has actually caused a slight drop in the frequency of "Groom payment" marriages.

As elsewhere, the changes have occurred in two steps. Some of the "No payment" groups have had to pay "Bride Price" while others have gone in for widow marriage. Some sections which had succeeded in Period I to exact payment to the groom, apparently moved down to the "No Payment" group. This is not possible in an area like Bengal where social rules are more rigid, but can occur in Bihar with its more elastic social classification of semitribal groups. Again, there were numerous widowers also left behind by the epidemic. They would have to pay "Bride Price" or at most avoid payment. Those who were of the "Groom Payment" group originally, would naturally move to the "No Payment" group.

In the next period III the drop in real wages weakened the position of men as well as women, in the matter of receiving payment. A small drop is observed in both frequencies. Since the abnormal conditions leading to increased widow marriage had also passed, there was a sharp shift to the intermediate group of "No Payment" from all sections.



It is not possible to carry out a similar analysis of the Muslim groups province by province for two reasons. The sample for Bengal is unduly small. The Bihar and U. P. Muslims are not separated by barriers of provincial castes as among Hindus. Hence there is not such a clear cut separation.

CHAPTER II

LIVING CONDITIONS AND REQUIREMENTS

The income for the three periods 1941, 1945 and 1949 are noted below :

Table 23

Type of Unit	1941	1945	1948—49
Individual	Rs. 21·4	Rs. 35·6	Rs. 63·7
Family	Rs. 30·6	Rs. 61·6	Rs. 115
Rise in prices with 1939 as base	115	314	about 375

The earnings in 1941 were less for the family compared to rise in prices above 1938 but slightly more for the individual. It is clear from the figures for increase in the cost of living, that real wages had fallen a good deal in 1945 but some recovery was made by 1948-49.

In 1927-28, in the Kankinarrah jute factories 49,243 operatives drew Rs. 10,48,929 as total wages per month i. e. Rs. 21·3 per earner or an income of 11 annas 4 pies to meet daily needs. This is close to the individual income in 1941 for the sample



studied by Mahalanobis. The Kankinarrah Union which noted the income figures in their report to the Royal Commission of Labour also mention certain figures said to be "taken partly from records and partly from personal investigation" for weekly expenses :

These are reduced for food to a daily scale :

Cereals	—	32 ounces	—	0-3-3
Pulse		7 ounces	—	0-1-0
Ghee and Oil		3.5 ounces	—	0-2-8
Vegetable	}	Not stated	—	0-2-4
Meat, Salt				
Spices				
Total on food			—	0-9-3

On other expenses like clothes, fuel, light, rental, washing, barber's service, smoking, pan, drugs, tiffin, tea etc the daily average comes to 0-6-2 nearly. The total on food plus other items is 0-15-5 nearly. The amount required to be spent on such food works out as 60 per cent of the total expense, and 80 percent of the average income. For a vegetarian it is slightly more. While the amount of cereal noted is an overestimate, it makes an excess of $\frac{3}{4}$ anna only per day on food or one anna per day in all. It is clear that there would be a deficit in the matter of income per worker in 1929 for both types of workers if they ate the food that they needed and met other requirements. The estimates of food expenses by the Public Health Dept. in the same report shows that to have an adequate diet a worker needed to spend 70 to 80 per cent of his total income.



A calculation on the basis of dietic requirements as noted by Dr. Aykroyd may be made, although, strictly speaking, the estimates of Dr. Aykroyd are underestimates for workers engaged in heavy industry.

An examination of the actual quantities of various articles of food consumed by the jute mill workers in 1945 reveals a serious deficiency in this respect. The details will be noted, first, for individual workers. The average consumption per month for an individual was found to be 17.02 seers of cereals (rice, atta etc), 4.37 seers of potato and onions, 4.32 seers of other vegetables, 4.66 seers of pulse, 1.57 seers of fats and oils, 2.57 seers of milk, meat and fish, i.e., animal proteins and 1.17 seers of salt and spices. The total comes to 35.68 seers per month, i. e. 1.27 seers per day. Taking one seer as equal to 32 ounces approximately, this comes to 40.6 ozs. daily. According to Dr. W. R. Aykroyd (vide his note on Results of Diet Surveys in India, published in 1941), an adult workman should have a balanced diet of 43 ozs. daily. The Government of India Health Bulletin written by Dr. Aykroyd and revised in 1951 by Patwardhan gives a higher figure of 48 ounces.

The proportion of nutritive food is also much lower in the diet of our jute worker. Thus the adult workman is expected according to the lower estimate to take per month (30 days) 14 seers of cereals, an equal amount of fats and oils, and 10.3 seers of milk, meat, fish and eggs. It is clear that actually he gets about 8 per cent less of vegetables, no fruit, about 20 to 25 per cent less of fats and oils and 75 per cent



less of animal protein than he needs. These deficiencies he tries to make up by taking more cereals and pulse. If we exclude salt and spices and compare only the articles of food as noted by Aykroyd, we find that the deficiency in quantity is about 9 per cent.

In the case of the family units, the position is worse. For comparison with the individual unit, it is necessary to reduce the family membership to adult scale. The different members being of different age and sex, the consumption will be different. The 'family unit' resident in Jagatdal in 1945 was composed of 1.58 adult men 1.16 adult women and 1.68 adolescent and children. For purposes of reduction it is usual to use Lusk's tables, which were drawn up on the basis of a large amount of actual data. For food the requirements are noted there as follows :—

Adult man over 15 years	1 unit
Adult woman over 15 years	0.83 unit
Child 0-15 years (two)	0.7 units each
Total for unit of four	3.23 units.

Prof. Radhakamal Mookerjee in his work "The Indian working Class" (11) has quoted another estimate, which is given by the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. A.

Unit of four members needs = Adult man 1.0 unit +
Adult woman 0.83 + Boy about 10 years 0.8 + girl
5 years 0.5—Total 3.13 units.

Chattopadhyay has used in his note "How Jute workers live" a more conservative estimate (i. e. on the low side) of the requirements.

(11) The Indian Working class by Prof. Radhakamal Mookerjee (Bombay 1945)



Unit of four needs : An adult man 1 unit

Adult woman $\frac{3}{4}$ i. e. 0.75 unit

Adolescent child $\frac{2}{3}$ i.e. 0.67 unit

Young child $\frac{1}{2}$ i.e. 0.5 unit

Total 2.92 units only

A young child needs milk which is costly. Hence the estimate made above for a child is fair although the consumption of cereals is normally less than half that of an adult.

In the case of the Jagatdal workers in 1945 the unit was slightly different. Using Chattopadhyay's estimate, which is more conservative, and therefore will not lead to errors of overestimation we find that equivalent of adults per family was 3.5 and hence the Family consumption per capita adult was as follows in 1945 (in ounces)*

Table 24

	Cereal	Vegetables	Pulse	Fruit	Fats & Oils	Meat Milk etc	Total
Family	17.2	5.8	3.2	Nil	1.0	1.8	29
Aykroyd's recommendation	15	10	3	2	2	11	43

Evidently, the deficiency in total quantity is of the order of 30 per cent while animal protein is lacking to the extent of over 80 per cent, and vegetables and fats and oils are barely half of what are needed. The earlier survey* of 1941 had also revealed

* The actual composition of the "family unit" has been used here. The earlier estimate was approximate.



deficiency in diet for the individual as well as the family. But there has been a decline in even the poor diet that was available in 1940-41. In 1941 the total deficiency was of the order of 25 per cent for family members. Protein deficiency was about 70 per cent, while vegetables, fats and oils were half or there about of the amount needed. The reason is very simple. A reference to the prices for 1940-41 and 1944-45 for the same period reveals that rice had gone up in price by 273 per cent in 1945 and atta by 187 per cent (rationed prices for both). Pulses, potato, fish and meat, which are not rationed showed an increase of prices by 360, 533, 290 and 343 per cent respectively. Milk was no cheaper, having gone up 300 per cent in price. The effect of this abnormal all round rise in prices and failure to supply rationed cereals at least at a cheap rate increased the per capita expenses in 1944-45 on food by 92.1 and 87.3 per cent respectively for individuals and families over the 1940-41 level. The individual who used to spend each month on food Rs. 8.01 in 1940-41 spent in 1944-45 Rs. 15.26 for this purpose. In the family, however, the resources per capita were much smaller. We find that in 1940-41 the food expenses per capita was Rs. 5.21 but it rose to Rs. 9.44 in 1944-45. Even allowing for the presence of children and adolescents in the family, the lower values indicate the poorer quality of the food, which we have already stated in detail. It may be noted here that if cereals and pulses had been supplied at cheap rates or if the dearness allowance or basic wages had risen



proportionately, at least the total quantity of food consumed per capita would not have fallen below the required amount. We may add in this connection that the fuel prices needed for cooking had also gone up to over 300 per cent (coal to 377 per cent and firewood to 329 per cent) and the expenses per capita had trebled for this item.

Clothing—After food we may consider the expenditure on clothes. In 1940-41 the individual worker used to purchase 36·7 yards of clothes per annum besides 2·9 yards of miscellaneous clothing. In 1944-45 these amounts fell to 26·9 and 2 yards respectively, i. e. decreased by 27 per cent. In the family, the earlier period shows a total purchase per capita of 18·4 yards and in 1944-45, of only 12·7 yards which is a reduction by 31 per cent. While the total quantity purchased thus fell sharply, the expenses per capita rose for individuals from Rs. 12·3 to Rs. 25·7 per annum and for families from Rs. 6·7 to Rs. 13·5 in 1944-45. The expense on clothing had actually increased by 108·9 and 101·5 per cent respectively for individuals and families. A detailed examination revealed that in spite of such increase, purchases of coats, caps, wrappers etc for winter and of articles of bedding have practically disappeared. Only the clothing needed to cover the body, like dhoti, saree, lungie, shirts etc. and the simple gamcha (thin towel) for washing were bought by the workmen. * Here again a reference to the price tables for the same season in 1940-41 and 1944-45 furnishes adequate explanation. Dhotis,



sarees, and shirtings had gone up in price by 278, 267 and 278 per cent and lungis and gamchas by 421 and 367 percent. The purchase of the essential articles of clothing left no surplus for the articles of bedding or for winter clothes.

Housing :—The reports on housing submitted to the Royal Commission of Labour, are illuminating. "Dr. Brahmachary, Assistant Director of Public Health in a report on the sanitation of Bhatpara Municipality, comprising the 12 jute mills within the jurisdiction of the Kankinarrah Labour Union says 'Bustees are an important feature of the town,' The officer notes that barring 12000 who live in houses (not bustees) and 7000 who "are accomodated in the coolie lines of the mills, the whole of the remaining population (60,000) lives in the huts of the bustees about 30 in number. They are ill drained and ill provided with privies and passages. "Mr. Thomas Johnstone, M. P. (for Dundee) who visited the bustees...says 'Two thirds of the workers in this industry which makes 90 per cent dividend for the {shareholders are housed in vile filthy disease ridden hovels called bustees. These bustees are one storied blocks of mud plaster on wicker and matting with thatched roofs; no windows...the thatch...is so low that one has to go down almost on hands and knees to enter. The bustees have neither light nor water supply; the floors are earthen; sanitary arrangements there are none, and usually access.. can only be had along a narrow tunnel of filth...The remaining third of the



workers are housed in mill lines or compounds. Some of these cement rows are a vast improvement upon the bustees but the best of them are nothing to write home about. They are single room cement houses without light or water or sanitary arrangements in the houses. The rooms are frequently 10 feet by 8 feet by 6 feet height and possess a window... We found large numbers of these houses over crowded with 4 or 5 men."

"The chairman of the Bhatpara Municipality says in the annual administration report for 1927-28" that the Zaminder who owned the bustee ("a leading congressman") obstructed attempts at improvement of sanitary condition of the bustees.

Dr. Bentley, Director of Public Health noted about lines of labourers built by mills: "Most of the houses are in rows of one roomed back to back tenements, each provided with a verandah in which cooking and washing is done." Dr. Bentley notes a list of 31 mills in the North as well as South belt. The floor space per worker came out as 29 square feet approximately plus a bit of verandah for cooking. The Assistant Director Dr. Batra speaking about bustee huts of workers in industry stated that "the size of rooms vary from 8' x 8' to 10' x 10'. In nearly all cases the rooms are provided with verandahs 4' wide used for cooking purposes. The rooms are dark and in none of them sunlight can penetrate through. Regarding ventilation, it is unsatisfactory". Usually three workers occupied such a hut. In 1943, K. P. Chattopadhyay visited a number



of huts selected at random in one of the biggest Jute workers' bustees in Howrah. None of the huts inspected were better than those described in the report quoted above, even after a lapse of fifteen years. On the contrary, they had no verandahs for cooking. It was done in the room unless the men arranged for messing elsewhere. The floor space per capita in 1928 was 28 square feet or thereabouts excluding the verandah. This was also found to be the case in 1940-41 and 1943. The floor space per capita was then 28'6 square feet showing that there had been no improvement. In 1944-45 the average floor space was found to have dwindled to 24 square feet per head. This is an area 6' x 4', equivalent to that of a charpoy on which workmen sleep. In other works, the jute workers live in huts, huddled side by side without any room to stretch or move.

Owing partly to the fact that in many jute mills the employers furnish quarters (of this type), the rental had risen only ten per cent. In Calcutta and certain areas, rent control had also been effective. But the quality of sanitary arrangements had fallen considerably. In some of the Jagatdal jute mill barracks, the employers had actually given permission to 7 men to live in rooms which previously could house only 4 persons. As no arrangement was made for increased conveniences, men and women were found in these areas to get up at about half past four in the morning and to queue up to be able to finish their ablutions etc. to be in time for



the morning shift at the mill. Regarding the type of floor and roof of these residences it may be noted that 67 per cent had tiled roofs, of which 42·6 per cent were of country made khola, and about 5 per cent were covered with thatch or tin plate. The remaining 28 per cent were pukka terraces. Brick floors were found in 42·3 per cent rooms and another 11·7 per cent had these cemented. The other 46 per cent huts had only mud floors. Nearly 82 per cent rooms had brick walls and the rest were of mud.

Comforts :—It is often stated loosely that workmen waste a good deal of their earnings on drink, smoke and dissipation. A careful study was, therefore, made of the expenses on various heads like those on betel, tobacco, intoxicants and amusements. The per capita expenses on betel and tobacco was, for an individual, a little less than half anna daily or Re. 0·89 per month in 1940-41. When prices soared more than 200 per cent upwards, in 1944 the expenses barely doubled on these heads. They rose to Re. 1·95 per head. For families, the per capita charges were much less, being Re. 0·22 and Re. 0·57 per month for the two periods. The expense per capita on intoxicants was about 6 annas per month for individuals in 1940-41, and rose to 8 annas in 1944-45. For families the corresponding figures were 2 annas and 3 annas respectively. It may be added that the price of tobacco went up by 800 per cent and country liquor by 162·5 per cent during the interval.



The amount spent on amusements was 2 annas per head per month for individuals in both periods. As prices of cinema tickets and also tickets for all kinds of shows increased during 1941-45, this means that the visits became less frequent. For families the per capita expenses on amusements were half anna and one anna per month in the two periods. The visits to cinemas and other places of entertainment were obviously very rare at both periods. Considering the hours of work of the millhands, the poor food they get, the bad houses they live in, and the practical impossibility of having normal recreation in social or community life, it must be admitted they spend precious little on their so called vices of smoking, and use of intoxicants or on visits to places of amusement.

A study was also made of the expenses on education, postage, newspapers, medical treatment and ceremonials. Some rites cannot be avoided; these are attendant on birth, marriage, and death. Some religious ceremonies are equally important in the lives of Hindus as well as Muslims. The expenses per capita per month on education, postage and news papers was about 3 annas for individuals and 1 anna for families in both periods. For medical treatment, it varied from 4 to 5 annas for individuals and from 3 to 5 annas for family members. Ceremonials were more expensive; but even these came to a total of 11 annas per capita per month in 1940-41 and rose to Rs. 1.1 in 1944-45 per individuals. For families the figure was 5 annas in both periods. Another important



item has to be mentioned in this connection—that on services rendered by the washerman and barber. The total expenses on these heads came to 7 annas per capita per month in 1940-41 and rose to 9 annas in 1944-45 for an individual. For families the corresponding figures were 2 annas and 3 annas respectively.

In the table below the average per capita expenses (in Rs.) for individuals and families are given in summary form under the major heads. A small amount is also sent each month to village homes.

Table 25
EXPENSES IN RUPEES.

Items*	Individual		Family	
	1940-41	1944-45	1940-41	1944-45
Food	8.01	15.26	5.21	9.44
Clothing	1.02	2.14	0.56	1.12
Fuel and Light	0.80	2.61	0.48	1.40
House Rent	0.61	0.61	0.38	0.43
Comforts, Ceremonies etc.	4.34	7.08	2.11	3.19
Remittance House etc.	5.53	8.68	0.60	1.00
Total	20.31	36.38	9.34	16.58

* Revised figures published after retabulation in the article of Chaturvedi and Bhattachayya have been accepted as more accurate. (15)

It is obvious from these figures that excluding remittance home the "Individual" spent 59.6 per cent and the "family" 65.1 per cent

15. On the change in standard of living of the jute mill workers of Jagtdal by H. K. Chaturvedi and S. Bhattacharyya (Sankhya, June, 1948).



of its total disbursements' on food and fuel in 1940-41 and that these figures rose to 64.5 and 69.5 per cent respectively in 1944-45. Clothing and house rent together took another 11.0 and 10.7 per cent of expenses in 1940-41 for the two units ; these figures fell to about 9.9 per cent for each of the two groups in 1944-5. What we have termed "comforts" etc through courtesy are largely necessities. They accounted for 29.3 and 24.1 per cent of expenses for the individual and the family in 1940-41. In the period 1944-45, the percentages fell to 25.5 and 20.5 respectively. This was done to meet the increasing cost of essential food commodities. We have shown in our detailed discussion on food, clothing habitation etc, how the quality and quantity of each had deteriorated. A calculation of the cost of living index for 1944-45, on the basis of 1940-41 figures, gives the value 273. As the total increase in income had been 69.8 per cent for individuals and 109.4 per cent for families, the deficiency had been met by reducing the already low standard of living.

It has already been stated that the Indian Statistical Institute will publish a detailed note on living conditions in 1949 comparing it with the earlier data. These details are therefore left for them to work on. Here we shall note one important fact. The proportion of the income spent on food is a fair guide of the condition of the worker. We have so far noted the proportion of total expenses spent on food. Now we shall consider the proportions of income so used. We have come across earlier rough estimates which show that if the worker did take adequate nourishing food, he would have to spend 80 per cent of his income on food alone. As the Kankinarrah Labour Union pointed out in 1929 in their report about "Individual" workers, the men have to cut down expense to 60 per cent of the income to be able to send money home to maintain their families. This estimate agrees fairly well

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(considering the limited data collected by the Labour Union) with that of the scientific survey of 1941.

The expenses on food for individuals and for family units of average size 4.33, 4.42 and 4.34 in 1941, 1945 and 1949 are noted below in rupees.

Table 26

	1941	1945	1949
Individual	8.01	15.26	28.89
Family	22.6	41.7	68.76

In terms of the income figures noted earlier, the per-centages of income spent on food come out as follows.

Table 27

	1941	1945	1949
Individual	37.3	42.7	45.4
Family	73.7	67.7	59.8

We may compare this with the change in figures for income in 1945 and 1949, considering that for 1941 as base (= 100)

Table 28

	1941	1945	1949
Individual	100	166	297
Family	100	201	375.6



The size of the resident family unit had increased, it may be noted by only 2 per cent and 0.02 per cent respectively in 1945 and 1949 over the size in 1941. Those communities which sent their women to work in large numbers had increased their income disproportionately.

Table 29
INCOME FIGURES IN RUPEES PER MONTH

Province	Bengal Hindu	Bengal Muslim	Bihar Hindu	Bihar Muslim	U. P. Hindu	U. P. Muslim	Madras
Income 1941	46	30.4	23	27	23	27.8	28
Income 1949	141	94	107	93	95	101	128
Increase per cent over 1941 in integers.	306	309	461	307	413	363	453

While the disproportionate increase has evened up the difference in earnings to some extent, the bulk of the workers cannot be said to have been getting living wages in 1949. Although the increase has in some instances been in excess of rise of prices, it has not yet brought the minimum to that required for proper living.

We shall try to calculate the living wages by first finding out the amount needed each day for food on Dr. Aykroyd's scale.



Table 30

Item	Cereal	Pulse	Potato and Onion	Leafy Vegetable	Fruit	Fat and Oil	Milk	Fish Meat	Salt	Total
Quantity in ounce.	15	3	6	4	2	2	8	3	Less than 1	43
price 1939 Jagatdal in pies	15	2.8	3.6	1.6	2.4	4.5	9.6	7.5	1	48
Price 1949 Jagatdal.	39	10	12	6	4	24	46	36	3	180



The composition of the family in residence was as follows, on an average in 1949.

	Earners per Family	Dependant	Total
Adult Men	1.39	0.21	1.60
Adult Women	0.31	0.78	1.09
Adolescent Boy	0.04	0.51	0.55
Adolescent Girl		0.55	0.55
Children		0.55	0.55
Total	1.74	2.60	4.34

Non-resident dependants average 1.4 in number. Their composition is not possible to check by actual observation.

On the basis of Chattopadhyay's estimates the adult male equivalent of the resident family is 3.43 only. For the non-resident part, we may consider it as being equally likely to be an adult man, an adult woman, an adolescent and a child. The average is 1.02 of an adult male for the 1.4 persons. Since the expenses in a village will be less than that in town, by about 30 percent we may say that there will be on an average 0.7 adult equivalent of non-resident dependant on urban basis. The total then rises to 4.40 approximately. It is not possible to be more exact. Separate calculations of living wages needed for the resident family and for the estimated entire family are given below.

As Mahalanobis did not collect data about non-resident dependants, and the size and composition of the family from the point of view of consumption of food was not appreciably different in 1941,



we shall calculate the living wages for both periods of a complete family of the average size found in 1949. In order to get this result we have to take into account other expenses.

The actual expense on other items, like clothing, house rent, fuel, occasional amusement like visit to a cinema or comfort articles like pan and tobacco have been obtained in different surveys. In the case of jute workers the total for "other expenses" excluding food and fuel came to a little more than half that spent on food and fuel in 1941. In 1944-45, the proportion fell slightly as real wages decreased due to the increments not keeping pace with rise in prices. The quantity of food consumed was also less than that laid down in the Standard diet table. The Calcutta middle class families were also similarly hard hit due to rising prices. There is however an important difference in the percentage of the total expenditure allotted to food by industrial workmen and the middle class. Among workers, the percentage spent on food by families was 65.1 in 1940-41 and rose to 69.5 in 1944-45. Among middle class families in Calcutta the percentage spent on food in the income groups up to Rs. 150 was 50.5 per cent in 1939 and rose to 65 in 1945. (16)

The proportion of the cost of food to be added will therefore be somewhere between $\frac{1}{2}$ and 1. For, in 1941, also, the workmen were badly off. On the other hand in 1941, a salary of Rs. 150 was living

16. World war II and the consumption pattern of the calcutta middle class by S. Bhattacherya (Sankhya, March 1947).



wages for a middle class family with about 6 members, for whom the percentage is noted. Middle class folk spend more on comfort items than workers. It may of course be argued and rightly that workers also appreciate and should have such comforts. It may however be pointed out that the improvement in the food, qualitatively and quantitatively, suggested here, will automatically raise the two thirds share of its price to a higher level than before. We may calculate on the basis of half and also a level midway between half and one, say three fourths. The rates work out as follows :

Total amount needed per month

	1941 ($\frac{1}{2}$ basis)	1941 ($\frac{2}{3}$ basis)	1949 ($\frac{1}{2}$ basis)	1949 ($\frac{2}{3}$ basis)
Per capita	Rs. 11 4 0	Rs. 13 2 0	Rs. 42 3 0	Rs. 49 3 6
Per Resident family (3.43 adult).	Rs. 38 9 5	Rs. 45 0 4	Rs. 144 11 3	Rs. 168 13 2
Including Non-resident Dependant (0.7 adult)	Rs. 46 7 5	Rs. 54 3 4	Rs. 174 13 9	Rs. 203 4 5
Actual family income.	Rs. 30 9 7		Rs. 115 0 0	

Bhattacharya has used the 1941 data to calculate the minimum amount needed then for proper living conditions of jute workers. (17) He has followed a somewhat different approach regarding "other expenses". According to him Rs. 49-6-0 is the sum needed to meet the minimum living requirements of a family of 3.63 adults". The figure 3.63 was obtained by him using Lusk's tables.

17. A note on the scale of minimum wage for Jute mill workers of Bengal by S. Bhattacharya (Sankhya, October 1947).



One thing will be clear from the different estimates. Even the most conservative estimate of lower limit of family income needed for proper living is not reached by those who are on the average the best paid semi skilled and skilled workers—the Bengal Hindus. The rest are worse off.

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